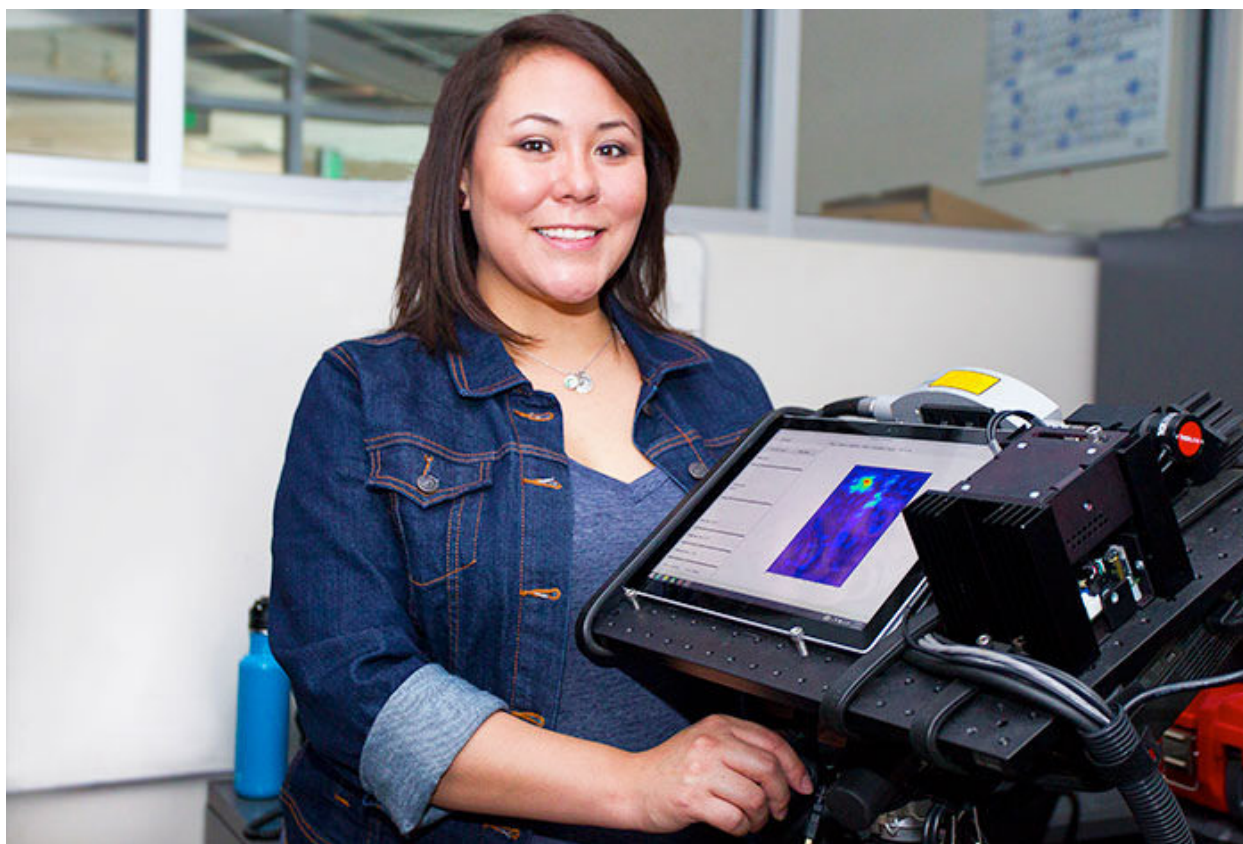




Students can gain valuable work experience and income at Los Alamos

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New Mexico students and those from far away currently are gathering at Los Alamos National Laboratory to take advantage of unique internship opportunities this summer and in some cases throughout the year. But Scott Robbins, team leader for the Laboratory's Student Programs office, already is getting ready for the next batch of applications.

"Every year the Laboratory hosts more than 1,200 students," Robbins said. "Having an opportunity to apply what the students learn at school in a real-world problem-solving context can help bring their educational efforts to life. Los Alamos' mentors work with the students to shape the work assignments with this objective in mind."

The Laboratory's student programs are aligned with the applicants' educational level. Northern New Mexico high-school seniors, for example, can deepen their work experience, gain insights into career options and strengthen their educational goals

through the institution's "High School Co#op Program," which offers internships exclusively to regional applicants.

Internships for undergraduate and post-baccalaureate college students are available through Los Alamos' "Undergraduate Student" and "Graduate Research Assistant" programs, neither of which carries geographical restrictions.

But being selected for a Laboratory internship is a competitive process.

Competition

"While Los Alamos places students in a wide range of assignments," Robbins explained, "most of the applicants selected are majoring in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields and computer science. Placements in business and operations roles are not as numerous, which makes this selection process even more competitive."

Factors that influence the selection include the students' academic preparations and networking skills as well as Laboratory funding.

"Grades really do matter for all students interested in coming to Los Alamos," Robbins said. "Undergraduates must have a cumulative grade point average (GPA) at or above 3.0 and graduate students must keep their GPAs at or above 3.2."

Networking is a key part of securing a student internship, according to Robbins.

"In the absence of pre-existing contacts at Los Alamos, such as those established by a teacher or professor or made directly at career fairs or conferences," Robbins noted, "students can contact Laboratory researchers and student mentors involved in projects relevant to their academic and career ambitions. A great resource for looking up possible mentors is the Laboratory's annual Student Symposium abstract book. The most recent online copy can be located through internet search engines."

Currently, the 2014 issue is the Laboratory's most recent [Student Symposium abstract book](#) (pdf).

Funding

Laboratory funding is an important consideration in the application process.

"Most Laboratory organizations that host student interns have to pay the students' salaries using their own financial resources," Robbins said, "and the ability to afford these costs varies quite a bit. Students who want to increase their chances may try joining programs that provide funding to cover the costs of their salaries. Two of the best programs for this purpose are the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internships (SULI) and Community College Internships (CCI). Students who are in the DOE-funded SULI and CCI programs are easier to place, especially in Laboratory organizations where funding might be scarce."

Robbins suggests university grants as another option.

"Several university programs in New Mexico," Robbins said, "such as the University of New Mexico's College of Engineering and the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (New Mexico Tech), hold grants from the National Science Foundation to pay for undergraduate internships. Students can ask their faculty advisor or university department chair for details."

To learn more about Los Alamos' student internships, visit the [High School Co-op Program](#), [Undergraduate Student Program](#) and [Graduate Research Assistant Program](#) websites. Applications need to be submitted at least several months before the hoped-for start date.

For information on the SULI and CCI programs, consult the Department of Energy's [Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internships](#) and [Community College Internships](#) pages.

(You also might enjoy reading Associate Director for Chemistry, Life and Earth Sciences Nancy Sauer's [Students are our future](#) message in *Community Connections*' current issue.)

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